



## MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY OF SERVICE

Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE** 

### Promote Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)



#### The Challenge



Many low-to-moderate-income families cannot afford to pay a tax professional to prepare their income tax return. This often means that they will do it themselves or have a family member or friend do it and may miss vital income tax deductions that could put more money back into families' pockets. Some low-income families are unaware that they may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit, which can also put additional funds back into the hands of individuals and families. For the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, you can help to address this need by getting the word out about free tax help through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs located in many communities across the country. You can also

benefit your neighbors and local communities by raising awareness about the Earned Income Tax Credit.

This toolkit will help you to address this community need by:

- Explaining associated terms
- Highlighting helpful resources
- Sharing effective planning steps
- Outlining project management tips
- Providing ideas for communicating your message
- Sharing tips for reflection and reporting

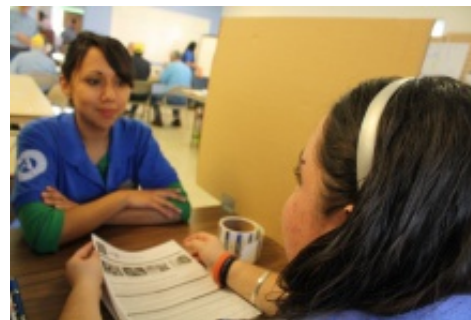


#### Prepare

##### Learn Associated Terms

Before you jump-start the planning phase of your project, be sure you know the terms associated with the work you are about to do.

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA):** An IRS program designed to help low and moderate-income taxpayers complete their annual tax returns at no cost. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations. VITA volunteers are trained to ensure low income families who qualify for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), get it. Clients do not pay a fee for these services.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC):** One of the federal government's largest and most effective anti-poverty programs, EITC is a federal tax credit for families and individuals who work but make very low incomes. The EITC results in an extra tax refund to those who claim and qualify for the credit. When the EITC credit exceeds the amount of taxes owed, qualifying individuals receive that credit in their refund, which can benefit both the recipient and stimulate the local economy. The EITC helps to reduce the federal tax burden on low-income workers.



## Learn about VITA and EITC

### Identify a Location

VITA sites are often located in community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other locations around the country.

To find the closest VITA site, call a toll free hotline 1-800-906-9887.

- Educate yourself about VITA Programs and the EITC (see Helpful Resources below). These sites have online toolkits with great information, tools, and products to learn more about the EITC and VITA.
- Contact VITA sites to tell them about the King Day of Service and let them know if you are working as an individual or with a group. ASK how you might be able to participate in service activities that support VITA and EITC. You may also wish to volunteer in programs locally.

## Browse Helpful Resources

- [EITC Information for IRS Partners](http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/EITC-Information-for-IRS-Partners) (<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/EITC-Information-for-IRS-Partners>)
- [EITC Awareness Day – January 25, 2013](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>)
- [EITC Central](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/central/main/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/central/main/>) : An online source for ready-to-use [news releases](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/central/newsreleases/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/central/newsreleases/>) , [letters to the editor](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/basicmaterials/newsletterarticles/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/basicmaterials/newsletterarticles/>) , and [tweets](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/basicmaterials/sampletweets/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/basicmaterials/sampletweets/>) .
- [Marketing Express](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/express/main/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/express/main/>) : Another source of grab and go products to help carry out the EITC message

- [Toolkit for EITC Outreach](http://eitcoutreach.org/) (<http://eitcoutreach.org/>)
- [The National EITC Outreach Partnership](http://www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership/index.html) (<http://www.cbpp.org/eitc-partnership/index.html>)
- [AARP Foundation Tax Aide](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/) ([http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp\\_taxaide/](http://www.aarp.org/money/taxes/aarp_taxaide/))
- [Find a Location for Free Tax Prep](http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Find-a-Location-for-Free-Tax-Prep) (<http://www.irs.gov/Individuals/Find-a-Location-for-Free-Tax-Prep>)
- [VITA Learning Courses and Certification](https://www.linkleamcertification.com/d/) (<https://www.linkleamcertification.com/d/>)
- [VITA Training Guide](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4491.pdf) (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p4491.pdf>)



## Plan

### Build a Team

A successful group effort requires a motivated team whose members agree upon clearly defined tasks, set reachable goals, and act with inspiration and purpose.

- Start off planning with folks you know, and ask them to tell others to join your efforts.
- Meet regularly, especially as MLK Day approaches.
- Assign concrete tasks to keep everyone motivated and on track.
- As you work, talk about the parallels between Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s impact and your own.



### Set Goals

#### Build your planning team

Whether you are a team of few or many, a planning team will help you execute all aspects of your project. Below are some roles your planning team can take on. If it's only you: reach out to volunteers past and present to fulfill these roles:

- Project Development
- Volunteer Recruitment and Management Team
- Communications Team
- VIP/Leadership Engagement Team
- Fundraising Team
- Event Team

- Set goals, such as number of people trained, items supplied, and folks pledging to pass along what they've learned to others.

- Record these goals and make sure you can meet them. Ensure you and your team choose goals you can all agree on.

## Plan Your Project

There are a number of ways that you can assist in promoting VITA and the EITC. In addition to the ideas that you receive when you contact your local VITA site, here are a few other ideas:

- Find out if the VITA sites in your community are familiar with the [EITC Awareness Campaign](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>). If not, you can share this information with them and/or utilize the Awareness Campaign resources to host your own [EITC Awareness Day](http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/) (<http://www.eitc.irs.gov/ptoolkit/awarenessday/>).
- Share referral information about local VITA sites and the EITC with local VISTA project sites or other groups working on anti-poverty or with low-income residents.
- Connect local VITA sites with local schools so that students can bring VITA and EITC information home to their families.
- Recruit volunteers to canvass the community with information about VITA eligibility and locations and about the EITC.
- [Incorporate learning into any service you do \(node/292\)](#) by sharing information about the issues your project addresses and about Dr. King's work and teachings as it relates to the issue.

## Raise Resources for Equipment/Supplies

### Involving and engaging kids

Whether kids show up to volunteer or they unexpectedly arrive with parents who can benefit from your service, have activities that they can do such as:

- Carry light objects
- Decorate cards, lunch bags, or placemats
- Serve refreshments to the adults hard at work
- Organize or tidy the project spaces
- Watch a film about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

See [Engaging Kids in Service \(node/296\)](#) for more on kid-friendly service projects.

What supplies will you need to promote VITA and EITC in your community?

- Seek financial and in-kind donations from businesses for the supplies you'll need to run your project
- Solicit funds from team members and/or others to purchase items you need for successful MLK Day
- Purchase the necessary supplies prior to the service day so they're ready to go on MLK Day.

## Manage Your Project

The following tips will assist you with managing a successful service project.

- Utilize [do lists \(node/294\)](#) for the days leading up to, day of and post event day.
- Even if some volunteers will be doing door-to-door distribution of materials, it is important that the group start off the day together and review what you are trying to accomplish.
- Make sure [team leaders or coordinators \(node/299\)](#) are at the site early, the site is set up, and they are ready to greet volunteers or community members as they arrive.
- Officially welcome everyone and talk about the purpose of the event: promoting VITA and the EITC for the community in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Organize team leaders and/or volunteers into different work teams. For example, have different people greeting participants, handing out refreshments, responding to questions, or distributing materials.
- Build moments of reflection into your planned activities. Share stories and words from Dr. King and about any insights you've gained so far [about the connection between your service and Dr. King's teachings \(node/292\)](#).
- Document the day with photos or video and be sure to have volunteers and other participants sign a photo release form.
- Conduct your event, offering continuous encouragement to volunteers and participants.



## Communicate Your Message

Publicize your event using a combination of low-tech outreach, traditional, and social media.

### Low-tech Outreach

- Post flyers in public places
- Use community bulletin boards
- Ask area businesses to spread the word (e.g. flyers at registers or posters in store windows)
- Make announcements at schools, churches, or civic groups



### Traditional Media

- Invite the news media (print and broadcast) to report about your upcoming event or to attend and share information about accomplishments. Use a [press release \(Node/252\)](#) or a [media advisory \(Node/252\)](#).
- Make follow-up phone calls to the news media
- Place free ads in the community affairs section of your local papers

### Digital and Social Media

- Submit your event to local online calendars and LISTSERVs
- Promote your project, and document the day, through Facebook, Tweets, and pictures
- Reach out to a local blogger and ask if he/she might cover the event



## Share Impact

### Assess and Reflect

Assess and reflect on the project after it is completed. Host an official debriefing meeting for team members after the service day. Ask the team to reflect on the following questions:

- Examine the goals you set for yourselves. Which ones did you meet? Which exceeded your expectations? And which goals did you not quite reach?
- What did you accomplish?
- Who did your work impact in your community?
- What went well and what could be improved for next time?
- What VITA/EITC resources or outreach methods would you use again in the future? Which ones would you forego?
- Consider what doing this work on MLK Day, in particular, meant to your community.
- Go back to your initial investigation into the local problems you elected to help tackle and ask more questions. For example: If you distributed information about VITA and EITC to members of your community, what else could you provide to them, after tax season that would help them along the path to greater financial security? What other organizations or programs in your community could you offer your help to?



### Share Your Story

We know you might not like to brag, but please do! You may inspire others to organize an EITC and VITA event once they hear what you accomplished. Share your service accomplishments with:

- Volunteers, financial and in-kind supporters and constituents groups; the accomplishments could accompany a thank you letter
- The media; thank all media who reported on your planned activities or covered your service project along with sharing accomplishments from the project and any plans for the future
- The Corporation for National and Community Service; learn about multiple ways to [share your story](http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share) (<http://www.serve.gov/?q=site-page/share>) .

313 reads

**Corporation for National Community Service**  
**MLKDay.gov**